



4-H Earth Is Our Home Activity



Topic: Sustainability • **Estimated time:** 40 minutes (after the cards are printed and cut apart) • **For individuals and groups**

Choose to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle

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Think about the items people use and dispose of each day—bottled water, bottles and cans of soda, Styrofoam™ plates, grocery bags, newspapers, food, and more. What happens to these items after they are thrown in the **garbage**? Most likely, they end up in a **landfill**. Items in landfills can take weeks and even years to decompose. How can you help make sure this doesn't happen?

Learning Outcomes

Project skill: How to reduce, reuse, and recycle • **Life skill:** Be a responsible citizen • **Educational standard:** NGSS 5-ESS3-1. Obtain and combine information about ways individual communities use science ideas to protect the Earth's resources and environment. • **Success indicator:** Sorts pictures of items by reduce, reuse, and recycle



Supplies

- Reduce, reuse, recycle pages and sorting cards (below), printed and cut apart
- Household items for additional challenges

What to Do

Place the Recycle and Garbage page on a flat surface. Determine if each item should be recycled or thrown out by putting its card in the appropriate stack.

Collect the cards into one stack again and place the Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle page on a flat surface. This time there is no garbage! Can you **reduce**, **reuse**, or **recycle** each item? Some items may fit into more than one category. You might be able to reuse an item that another person would choose to reduce or recycle.



Talking It Over

Write your answers to these questions on a separate piece of paper and talk about them with your project helper or another caring adult.

SHARE What items make up the most of what is thrown away in your home?

REFLECT Can some of what is thrown away at your own home be reduced, reused, or recycled instead?

GENERALIZE What other ways can you reduce, reuse, or recycle at school, at someone else's home, or in public places?

APPLY Name at least one benefit to reducing, reusing, and recycling.



More Challenges

Find ten items around your house and sort into the categories of reduce, reuse, and recycle. Share your experiences with a friend or family member and challenge them to do the same.

Background

Landfills are necessary to properly dispose of waste, keep waste out of the environment, and keep communities clean. They do, however, take up lots of space for a very long time. The more we can keep items out of landfills, the longer those landfills will last, and the less space will be needed for new landfills. There are over 3,000 active landfills and 10,000 closed landfills in the United States, making most of this land unusable for many years.

- Reducing cuts down on the amount of garbage. A simple example is using a reusable plate, bag, or bottle instead of a disposable one. Another example is using the back side of a piece of paper instead of using a new piece.
- Reusing helps reduce the number of items going into the trash by finding new uses for items. Some ways you might reuse items are fixing something that is broken instead of getting a new one, donating used clothing so someone else can wear it, and reusing empty containers for some other, useful purpose.
- Recycling uses special equipment to separate recyclable materials and process them in different ways to make them into new things. Some items that are recyclable include paper, aluminum, tin cans, cardboard boxes, and many different types of plastics. Check with your local recycling facilities to see what items they accept.



Did you know?

According to Conserve Energy Future, it costs on average \$30 per ton to recycle trash, \$50 to send it to the landfill and \$65 to \$75 to incinerate it. That makes recycling an incredible bargain!

Vocabulary Words

garbage. Any matter that is no longer wanted or needed; trash.

landfill. A low area of land that is built up from deposits of solid waste in layers covered by soil.

recycle. To treat or process used or waste materials in order to make them suitable for reuse.

reduce. To cut back on the amount of trash that we use.

reuse. To use again in the same or a different way.

Learn More!

This seven-minute video called *Recycling for Kids: Learn How to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle* explains the process and makes easy-to-do suggestions. <https://youtu.be/Fex-wvrOZf4>

Want to know more fun facts? Check out *70+ Interesting Facts About Recycling That Will Stir Your Curiosity* at <https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/various-recycling-facts.php>.

Sources

The Hidden Damage of Landfills, Kayla Vasarhelyi. <https://www.colorado.edu/center/2021/04/15/hidden-damage-landfills>

Recycling for Kids: Learn how to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Learn Bright. <https://youtu.be/Fex-wvrOZf4>

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. United States Environmental Protection Agency. <https://www.epa.gov/recycle>

70+ Interesting Facts About Recycling That Will Stir Your Curiosity. Conserve Energy Future. <https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/various-recycling-facts.php>



GARBAGE

RECYCLE



foam cup



soda bottle



paper plate



coffee can



grocery bag



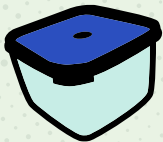
cereal box



ink cartridge



paper



plastic container
(like Tupperware™)



plastic bag
(like Ziploc™)



aluminum soda can



cardboard box



newspaper



juice box



glass bottle



water bottle



peanut butter jar



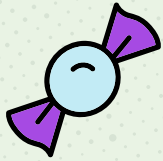
potato chip bag



light bulb



apple



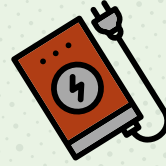
candy wrapper



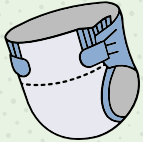
laundry detergent jug



book



electronics



disposable diapers



magazine



toothbrush



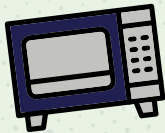
box of tissues



egg carton



banana peel



microwave



tires



plastic silverware



spray cleaning bottle



yogurt container



milk jug



ketchup bottle



shirt



shoes



batteries